872 has the photograph of Emperor Haile Selassie and the traditional Gospel of St. John in Geez. Priests now often teach the beginnings of basic arithmetic, in church schools.

783 In adult life, the church affects the layman less through participation in worship than through his individual confessor, the "näfs abbat", (lit. soul father). Each person is supposed to see him at least once a month, and he soon becomes a personal advisor, confidante, marriage counselor, etc. Therefore, even when a person changes residence, he often maintains this relationship to his "näfs abbat". If he were to take on a new one, the penalty assigned for sins (which the confessor keeps as a sort of fee) would be higher. His regular confessor, who knows his financial condition, asks little beyond the seasonal and festival gifts considered his due. In time of trouble, the regular confessor will appear as a character witness in court, or as "wäs" (guarantor) to help him obtain employment or to keep him out of jail pending trial.

585 Most laymen, are not married by eucharistic marriage in church (the "qurban"). There is no social or religious stigma to marrying outside the church; in fact the priest comes to the secular ceremony ("semanya") to bless the couple. But it does mean technical excommunication, and the couple cannot wear the "akilil" crown at church festivals and parades.

763 As a further result, such a couple cannot receive full last rites, though the confessor-priest will come

which happens among middle and upper feudal nobility--may herself become the founder msponsor of a church. In this case she usually ap,oints a male administrator from among her kinsmen, or a local cheqa shum headman, to supervise the sharecropper gabbar supplying her church. She then would also exercise direct or indirect control over the qōs gobāz, the administrating priest.

A commoner or peasant woman is much more exposed to the inferior legal status of womwn. According to traditional law, the "semanya" bond with the formula of the oath "May the Emperor die" (e.g. Hayle Selassye yemut"), is not legally valid, and her contractual function has to be performed through a male kinsman. Neverthe less, her legal position is by no means as weak as that of the Muslim woman. The Amhara woman may take half of her husband's movable possessions upon divorce, i.e. thecows she brought into her marriage and half theincreade of any pooled property. To protect her somewhat from wilful mistreatment at the hands of her husband, a bride is given two male protective "best men", the "mizān- but they are kinsmen of the bridegroom's!

Social inferiority of a commoner woman is also associated with her manual and menial labor, as hauler of water and hewer of wood or collector of cowdung.for fuel, and similar servant-like chores inside and outside the hut. The baby which she carries on her back and breast-feeds for two years renders her physically dirty and often smelly. The commoner woman may not

582 his late 'teens. The difference in what is considered "suitable age" is thus five or more years, for the girl may be as young as 13 or 14 in the still prevailing (though officially now outlawed) tradition. The reason is not only the earlier maturing of the girl, but partly the emphasis of protecting her virginity until marriage, partly the attitude that the groom must "tame" his bride - and the younger the better.

597 608 Consanguinal ties continue stronger, after marriage, than conjugal ties. The "artificial kinship" created at this period of the life cycle is that of the bride's "best man" ("misō") who is sworn to protect her even against her husband, and who is in a good position to do so as a residential kinsman of the husband. This emphasis on consanguinal ties even after marriage is similar to other parts of the Middle East (footnote 80), and also Africa.

885 A fully adult man ("sēw") and woman ("sɨ̄t") are honorifically addressed, e.g. in church usage, as "acmā adam" for man (from Geez "Adam"), "acmā hawwan" for woman (from Geez for "Eve"), and the connotation is that they have passed the hot-blooded "gobāz" and "qonje" stage and have become reasonable, calm, responsible persons who know the etiquette of their culture and have become fully cognizant of proper behavior at all forseeable events in the life cycle.

583 585 A. Marriage Patterns

There are three predominant types of marriage:

Footnote 80: Patai, Raphael: Relationship Patterns among the Arabs. Middle Eastern Affairs, Vol. 2, May 1951, pp. 180-5

583 585 1) the eucharistic church marriage, "qurban", engaged in only by a minority, such as some of the nobility, some of the older persons, and all of the priesthood; 2) the kin-negotiated ("civil") marriage, "semanya", sworn before the chega shum headman, and most [588] common; 3) the temperary marriage, for which the man engages to pay regular housekeeping wages, "damos", especially common among those who travel to markets.

585 "Semanya" literally means "80", and is thus also called the "eighty-bond marriage". This refers to the oath which includes the phrase "May the Emperor die", perjury against which used to be penalized by what was then the enormous sum of 80 Maria Theresa Thalers. It is also called "tegerai", by "contract"). This is the most common form of marriage, dominated by a complexity of kinship arrangements (described in detail below), and divorce is possible through similar negotiations and "parcelling out" of both goods and children. There is a minimum of individual emphasis in this marriage negotiation, especially in a first marriage, for the kin of both sides must be satisfied and "honored", though there is some element of original choice through informal courtship. The church takes cognizance by sending a priest to bless the couple.

"Qurban" marriage is not urged by the church on laymen, partly because of the sacerdotal character of the church, partly because the eucharistic sacraments are considered so holy that only serious, [586] mature, fully adult persons are advised to engage in it, and divorce cannot be granted. At this sacrament, the couple is rebaptized, and [587] may, on all church holy days, wear the "aklil" crown. Widows and widowers may remarry, but a priest who becomes a widower is expected to assume monkhood. The priest who blesses a "semanya"

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

585 bride and groom merely expresses the prayerful wish that "God will show the way" to the lay couple toward "qurban", in time. In fact, middle-aged couples who have gone through several divorces and have finally decided definitely to spend the rest of their days together, may take the "aklil" in "qurban". Qurban for lay people, e.g. deacons, is performed usually only 40 days after their "semanya", to make certain that their marriage bond is strong and real and that no rift has arisen (e.g. if the bride had been found not a virgin).

588 487 "Damoz" marriage (lit. wage) is what the term implies. Most commonly the arrangement is from month to month, but may be for longer or shorter periods, such as the duration of a caravan trip, or an extended stay at a major market, where the "damoz" wife offers the best and often the only available hotel and restaurant services. (She is similar to the Biblical lady in the city of Jericho). The term is a contraction of "damswa" (lit. "blood - and - sweat") compensation. Her wages vary greatly from region to region, and [465] have considerably increased in recent years, for even the new, modern law recognized her claim. In the past she did well if she received ETH$5.-per month in addition to housekeeping expenses, but [675] now some obtain ETH$20.- from traders. The agreement is made orally but before witnesses, so that she can go to court if the man defaults on his payments. If they separate at the expiration of the contract, she has no right to half his property as does the semanya [428] wife, but if there are children conceived during her contract, the children can make a claim for part of the father's inheritance should he die.

588 rewards as agreed upon") practiced by the Shi'ites in particular.
171 (footnote 81). The Abyssinian Coptic "Fetha Nägäst" forbids concubinage; but the custom has long been widespread. "Damos" is even recognised in the modern law of Emperor Haile Selassie.

551 Individual arrangements are freest in "damos", also in "qurban"
585 though sometimes less so, and least in "semanya". But in all three forms of marriage, the wife retains her maiden name and does not assume that of her husband. Even Empress Menen continues her old name. Sometimes the husband's mother may try to symbolize her authority - or even affection - by giving a new name to her new daughter-in-law living in her hamlet, but the bride's kinfolk and
[600] peers will continue to use her old name. This is another, unconscious, emphasis of kinship relations over affinal ones.

588 The "damos" is not considered contradictory to monogamy, which may explain her respectability despite prohibition of concubinage in the "Fetha Nägäst" code. Religious persons will explain the paradox away by quoting from Genesis "be fruitful and multiply".

583 In rural districts there is sometimes found a 4th form of
184 marriage, which indeed is re-enacted in some wedding ceremonies of "semanya". This form is bride capture, especially found among families too poor to defray the expenses of a wedding and cows that must be given the "semanya" couple. To cover up the shame and the poverty, the bride is "captured" and"pursued", by pre-arranged collusion. While she ostensibly goes, alone, to fetch water or gather deadwood, the groom's "mize" appear suddenly, preferably on horseback, and carry her off into the bush, while she, though em-

Footnote 81: Donaldson, D.M.: Temporary Marriage in Iran. Moslem World, 1936, pp. 358-364. Smith, W. Robertson: Kinship and Marriage in early Arabia, 1885.

584
608 for all concerned, and is reinforced by the public social sanction given the "swearing - in".

b) "Semanya" Wedding Procedure

585 The wedding consists largely of a formal recapitulation of all the negotiations in public, by the two kingroups involved, sometimes at considerable length, confirmed in a monosyllabic expression from bride and groom. The other major activities are feasting in both hamlets involved, a re-enactment of bride capture at nightfall, and the signs of virginity signifying that the "fortress is just taken".

The preferred day for weddings is Sunday, so that the deflowering, taking place after nightfall which is considered part of Monday, will not take place on the Lord's day. (footnote 82). For the same reason, weddings do not take place on Saturday; nor in lent, a period of mourning; nor on Wednesday or Friday fast days.

Preparations for feasting and gathering are made at both hamlets involved. At both places a "dass" shelter is erected on a square staked out with tall saplings, covered with leafy branches against the sun, with fragrant grasses on the ground. Relatives are invited, but strangers are kept away for fear of the evil eye.

The wedding guests among peasants begin to arrive about noon, Sunday, and are received, at the hamlet of the groom, under the men's "dass". The women occupy a neighboring "dass", busily cooking the meat sauce "wot". The groom remains inside a hut and does not appear until shortly before he has to leave for the hamlet of the

Footnote 82: Sunday is also wedding day of Christians of Lebanon. See - Feghali, Michel: La Famille Catholique au Liban. REEP, 6, pp. 291-308, Paris, 1925.

585 bride. Each guest brings a number of "enjära" breads, perhaps a dozen, and they leave cash contributions with the host, at least ETH$1-3. The afternoon is largely spent consuming barley-beer ("talla") of which the women have previously brewed huge jarsful. Particularly the "mizē" and the young men who will soon race across the countryside to fetch the bride, drink their fill to "be strong" and light and gay on their feet later on. The groom has been fed on meat and butter, to be strong; while the bride fasts to be "weak". The more old-fashioned elders, especially those not kinsmen, sit in a corner, and eat and drink there, draped off by spread-out tofas.

585 864 Sex information for the groom is one of the duties of the "mizē", who are usually older than he and married, but not of his parental generation, (particularly the older chief mize of the two, the "ser mizē", though sometimes the second "mize", called "galgal mizē"). If necessary, they are even expected to assist in the deflowering of a recalcitrant bride who suffers last-minute fright, by holding her down so that the groom can consumate the marriage that night. The bride is given no such outright information, and can only guess what will happen to her from whisperings of other girls and from what she has observed in the hut at night of intimacies of the parents on the raised "alga" bed. She may well be confused and frightened, but this is regarded as praiseworthy, as virtuous. Her nails are trimmed down to the skin just before the wedding, so that she cannot scratch, then placed in hot butter to heal and be smooth.

585 About three hours before nightfall, about 4PM (unless the bride's hamlet is too far away, in which case earlier), the groom appears before the "dass" of his patrilineal kin, dressed in a new, well-

585 made, blue-bordered "kuta" (double toga). His hair has been trimmed short, so that he will not appear like a rustic woodsman. His mise flank him, and henceforth never part from his side during the wedding proceedings. All three approach the groom's father, bow from the hip in greeting. A patrilineal elder addresses the groom in serious tones, reminding him that his obligations to his father continue although he will now be founding a house of his own. Then the father addresses his blessing to him, more briefly. In reply, the son makes the motion of kissing the father's feet, which the latter deftly prevents by tucking him under the chin so that the kiss lands on the knee. He also kisses the knee of the elder (the knee is regarded as the seat of strength). Then the groom and mise sit down about a minute, to symbolize having taken part in the initial festivities.

826

492 585 Meanwhile the escort saddle the biggest mule, preferable a strong, huge, "Senaar" mule. The groom bids farewell to the father and elder kinsmen, most of whom remain behind, though at least one elder kinsman rides along to act as spokesman, usually the "näggär abbat" who can best recapitulate the negotiations. The young "gobäz" escort run along on foot, brandishing their long sticks (formerly spears), shouting war shouts. A Senaar mule can go at a fast trot, so that the men on foot must keep on a run. The elder kinsman rides a smaller, Ethiopian mule.

585 Like a fast-moving army on the attack, the group crosses fields, trails, hills, valleys, finally stops in the valley below the hill on which the bride's hamlet is located. Here they catch their breath, shake off the dust, arrange their togas in "outgoing" fashion, go behind a bush to satisfy the call of nature after so much beer-

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

585 drinking. The "näggär abbat" now ascends the hill alone, to announce the peaceful intent of the arrived party. The bride's kin take formal cognizance of the arrival, but act as they did not know what the matter is all about. This initiates the formal recapitulation of the main points of the negotiation.

Permission is given for the party to climb up, and they stop before the "dass" shelter of the bride's family where a similar gathering of elders, kinfolk, males, females, are seated and drinking beer, in their separate groups. The groom is hidden by the mise who step in front of him within the groom's crowd standing in front of the shelter. The bride is still hidden in her parental tent.

In the presence of the čheqa shum, sometimes also the confessor-priest, the seated elder of the bride's asks: "Why have you come, my friends?". The groom's elder kinsman replies: "To ask for your girl so-and-so, to marry a son of our clan".

Question: "Who will the groom be?"

Reply: "So-and-so, son of so-and-so".

Question: "What have you in your hands?"

The reply enumerates the concmic agreements of the previous negotiation, and often a dabtara writes it all down. Finally, the bride's elder pronounces "Eshshi" (O.K.), and invites the groom's party in, without however seating them or offering drink. For first the young couple has to ratify the agreement. The groom is now revealed and takes the solemn oath, "May the Emperor die", such-and-such a girl is henceforth my wife". This is the "Semanya" oath. The groom's elder kinsman affirms: "Hayle Selassie yemut". The bride's kinsmen affirm: "Hayle Selassye yemut".

By this time night has fallen, little lamps are lit, and the

585 heavily veiled bride, unable to see through the heavy toga over her head and figure, is led to the center of the "dass" before the elders, to shouts of "allel" by the women. For in rural areas it is still considered shameful to take the bride away in daylight. Her kinfolk say to her: "Say that so-and-so is your husband". She is expected to whisper it shyly, so that her words are repeated by witnesses that she, too, has taken the "Semaya" oath. This is greeted by "ellel" joyshout of the women.

Next, the "mizé" are sworn in. The bride's father or elder say to the bridegroom: "Call for us two guarantors for her eyes, head and teeth". Whereupon the "mizé" step forward and take the oath.

Now the groom's party is invited to sit down, room is made for them, and beer and meat stew are passed to them.

The formal boasting, the "fukkara" dance and chant, is begun by the bride's kinsmen, then quickly taken up by the groom's kinsmen. Each side recites feats of bravery, renown, warriors, holy priests, "great men" in the ancestry and kin of the side to which it belongs. Spears or firearms are brandished, held behind the neck, while epic battles are recited in poetic form and exaggeration. Each tries to surpass the other in this friendly contest, (footnote 83), but mock each other's deficiencies in composition of verses or recitation.

The groom affirms by oath that he will "do good and not evil" to his bride, that they will live together: "I, by my shield, she

[17] Footnote 83: Similar boasting contests are common in the Middle East.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

585 by her spindle" ("barashay baensert"), with their pooled property and strength. In front of the confessor-priest, the groom extinguishes a light, saying: "May God extinguish me like this flame, if I break my oath to her". He gives the mize, if he can afford it, a neck-cord with a silver cross or ring on it, which the latter places around the bride's neck. For the groom does not touch the bride at her parental shelter.

Permission is finally given by the bride's elders to leave, and her spokesman proclaims: "Our daughter we herewith give to your son. Haile Selassye yemut".

The Senaar mule is quickly saddled, and after the groom has mounted, the heavily veiled bride is lifted behind him by the mize, so that she clasps the groom's waist. She is wearing jodphurs as noblewomen do when riding. Waving sticks and shouting war cries, the escort runs before and on both sides of the couple, lighting the way with resinous torches.

Arrived at the "dass" of the groom, the bride sits with him in a corner, flanked by the everpresent "mize", while loud boasting, "hotu" jumping, "fukkara" boasting, beer-drinking and feasting continue until about 3A.M. About an hour before that, the section in which the bride and groom are sitting is curtained off by means of togas, so that they can sleep together in privacy. Gradually the other celebrants drop off to sleep, heavy with beer, around the fire, all over the "dass", like a guard of honor for the bridal couple. Some of the young men, "gobaz" amuse themselves with teasing games, such as "mock-court" in which the loser is fined beer or honey or a goat (footnote 84); or with sexual buffoonery

585
831

Footnote 84: In Harar, southwest Ethiopia, a mock-lawsuit is held in which the loser must provide the drinks for a week after the wedding. See- Leslau: A Wedding Lawsuit in Harar. (Bibφ)

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

585
[3]] such as imitating the coitus of a donkey by holding a stick between the legs like a donkey's penis, and two other sticks held vertically to symbolise the vulva, teasing the bridegroom with enacted awkwardness until the actors find the "entrance". But finally the young men follow their elders in deep sleep.

The bride is expected to be, in fact contracted for, a virgin, "dengel". If she is not, there are several possibilities. The groom may lover her so much, or may be so ashamed, that he will keep silent. If he complains, the marriage can be forthwith annulled, in front of witnesses. In this case the shame is great for the bride, and she might be severely beaten. The "signs of virginity" are called "kebber" (lit. honor). The groom or the miss have the right to examine the clothing for blood, and the miss sometimes wave the trophy with glad shouting "The fortress is broken", even take the trophy with them 3 days later on their visit to the bride's family to bring the glad tidings, which honor the bride's kin, and collect their reward.

Since the bride is usually very young at her first marriage, she often suffers considerable pain. Usually she sits up quietly the next morning, in the corner of the "dass", with a serious face, while husband appears gay as the "victor". She is usually ashamed to cry out at night, among these strangers. When the sun rises, the groom and his friends walk some distance away to fulfill calls of nature, and discuss the "victory". When they return, the bride goes with some of the girls, but quietly and without boasting.

The following two or three nights, the bride and groom will have more privacy in a newly-built hut of their own, the "chagola" of "mushorra" (honeymoon hut), because, as the saying goes, "the

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

585 bride will cry out for many nights because of the pain". But is is also believed that this painful initiation into marriage bodes well for marital happiness, for, if later the husband neglects or mistreats her, she will remind him of his victory: "Remember you were my first, you were the one who hurt me".

184 585 In towns, several different customs prevail, and modern change, partly in imitation of nobility, partly in imitation of the Italians during their brief occupation, has seeped in, through eager, though partial, imitation.

In town the wedding ("serg") is more elaborate. Instead of the "dass" shelter, a large canvas tent is borrowed. Men and women still occupy separate tents. But the wedding takes place in daylight, in mid-afternoon, after which the unveiled bride, seated next to the groom, is driven in a rented automobile through the town, followed by other celebrants in varying conveyances or on foot. Before that, there is less boasting by kinsmen warriors and more by hired "azmari" minstrels, male or female, who entertain the wedding guests. If male they often accompany their impromptu verses with the single-string "masenqo" violin; if female, with the native banjo, the "qrar". They permit themselves such liberties as nudging the guests, singing flirtatiously, even aggressively at them, singing praises to rich individuals, the bride and groom, and kinsmen, to extort cash gifts from them.

There are tables and benches inside the tent at which guests are seated by the clever ushers, the hired "agafari" (lit. chamberlain), according to social status and official position in town. The ones of high status, including Europeans, are seated at the host's table (usually the groom's), and are served honey-mead ("tej")

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

184 instead of barley-beer, and the best of available meat dishes.
585 In return, the wealthier guests are expected to leave larger cash gifts as they leave. It is in this tent that the "semanya" marriage is performed, and the bridal couple blessed by the "manfas qubaé" priest, who will later watch over their marriage. His blessing is the same as that in the rural hamlet:

[539]

"May God make you capable of begetting, of conception, for office-holding, for honor,
for the communion and the flesh of the Lord.
May God guide you to truth and make you kin with
Abraham and Sarah".

Though the bride in town may be called out from the women's tent, and thus be the only female eating with the men, seated next to the groom, they still act shy with each other in public. Men like to believe that, though there are no tears in public, brides weep silently, out of fear; - the "vanquished sex". But the groom does not yet patronize her in public with the "gursha", hand to mouth feeding, as he will starting some weeks after.

c) Post-Wedding Adjustments and Kin Relations.

585 After the traditional rural wedding, the "dass" remains standing for a week, in both the groom's and the bride's hamlets, to shelter visitors. After two full days of marriage have passed, the mize go to the bride's hamlet to report on her well-being, adjustment and good treatment. They are feted and sleep in the "dass". The next day they return, carrying an invitation to the bridal couple and a specified number of companions (which is usually exceeded!) to come to the bride's hamlet for a 3-day visit, the "mäle".

585 [571] Three-day visiting is the pattern in kin visiting, for it usually takes one day for initial greetings and exchange of news, slaughtering and preparation of a sheep; a second day for feasting and talks with the neighbors; a third day for preparation of leave-taking.

After one week, the "dass" are torn down. A "great man" who is father of the bride, will usually send his daughter several donkeyloads of household staples, including lentils ("shuro"), peas cooked with salt, pepper, and spices, so that she will be honored and well treated by the women under whose jurisdiction she has come. Then, after a month, he will send a messenger to ask how she is habituated to the new life. If the reply is favorable, another load of grain, butter, spices, flaxseed oil are sent.

512 The adjustment of the bride may not be easy. The night she leaves her parental roof, she takes with her, besides her skin-mat, a little basket of dyed reeds, containing her personal little distaff, spindle, and glass necklace used in scouring pottery. After a week or a few weeks of honeymoon, she is expected to participate in the women's household tasks: fetching water and fuel, baking "enjära" daily for her husband, cooking "wot", to her husband's tastes, crushing barley, grinding "työff", brewing beer. If she complains too soon, the womenfolk will quote the proverb:

[539]

"Hardly arrived have you, young bride,
(but) already you crunch shembera (peas)"
(meaning: lazily pick at peas, instead of
doing the regular, harder work).

606 [591] The couple is expected to remain in patrilocal residence at least a year, so that the bride can be taught, by her mother-in-law, how

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

business of petitions, and few are without wives. This 621
causes many single women to live here, and when they are 443
old they have another resource, for in this town every Tues-
day there is a great market or fair at which three or four
hundred persons are brought together; and all the old
women and some young ones have measures to measure
wheat and salt, and they go to the market to measure and
gain their living; they give hospitality to those that sleep
there that day, and also take care for them of what remains
to be sold for the next market day. There is another 595
reason why there are many women in this town, it is 688
because the men who have plenty of food to eat keep two
or three wives; and this is not forbidden to them by the
King nor by their magistrates, only by the Church. Every
man who has more than one wife does not enter the church,
nor does he receive any sacrament: and they hold him to
be excommunicated. For a year and a half a nephew of
mine and I lodged in the house of a man named Ababitay,
and he had three wives still alive and acquaintances of ours,
friends in honourable friendship: they said that he had
had seven wives and thirty children of them. Nobody for-
bade them, except the Church, as has been said, which did
not give them the benefit of the sacraments; and before our
departure, he put away from him, and from intercourse
with him, two wives, and remained with one, that is to say,
the one he had last, who was the youngest, and already they
gave him the sacraments, and he entered the church like
anybody else, and as though he had not had more than one
wife. On this account there are many women in this town,
because the men are well off and are like courtiers; and they
take two or three, or more if it pleases them. In this [586]
country marriages are not fixed, because they separate for
any cause. I saw people married, and was at a marriage 585
which was not in a church, and it was done in this manner.
On the open space before some houses they placed a bed-

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

585 stead, and seated upon it the bridegroom and the bride, and there came thither three priests, and they began a chaunt with Hallelujah, and then continued the chaunt, the three priests walking three times round the bedstead on which the couple were seated. Then they cut a lock of hair from the head of the bridegroom, and another from the head of the bride. They wetted these locks with mead, and placed the hair of the bridegroom on the head of the bride, and that of the bride on the head of the bridegroom, on the place from which they had cut them, and then sprinkled them with holy water: after that they kept their festivities and wedding feasts. At night they put them in a house, and for a month from that time no one saw the bride, except one man only whom they call the best man,[1] who remains all this month with the married couple, and when this month is ended the man or best friend goes away. If she is an honourable woman she does not go out of the house for [784] five or six months, nor remove a black veil from her face: [843] and if before that she becomes pregnant she removes the veil. When these months are ended, even though she is not pregnant, she removes the veil.

CAP. XXI.—*Of their marriages and benedictions, and of their contracts, and how they separate from their wives, and the wives from them, and it is not thought strange.*

I saw the Abima Marcos, whom they call Pope, giving blessings in the church, that is to say, before the principal door; the bride and bridegroom were also seated on a bedstead, and the Abima walked round them with incense and cross, and laid his hands on their heads, telling them to observe that which God had commanded in the gospel; and that they were no longer two

[1] *Padrinho.*

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

separate persons, but two in one flesh; and that so in like 585
manner should their hearts and wills be. There they remained until mass had been said, and he gave them the communion, and bestowed on them the blessing. And this I saw done in the town of Dara, in the Kingdom of Xoa.[1] I saw another performed in the town of Çequete, in the Kingdom of the Barnagais. When they make these marriages they 586
enter into contracts, as for instance: If you leave me or I [675]
you, that one that causes the separation shall pay such a penalty. And they set the penalty according to the persons, so much gold or silver, or so many mules, or cloths, or cows, or goats, or so many measures of wood. And if either of them separate, that one immediately seeks a cause of separation for such and such reasons, so that few incur the penalty, and so they separate when they please, both the husbands and the wives. If there are any that observe the marriage rule, they are the priests, who never can separate, and cultivators, who have an affection for their wives because they help them to bring up their sons, and to harrow and weed their tillage, and at night when they come to their house they find a welcome reception: thus in effect or perforce they are married for the whole of their lives. As I said that they imposed penalties at marriages, the first Barnagais that we knew, whose name was Dori, separated from his wife, and paid her the penalty of a hundred gold ounces, which were a thousand cruzados, and he married another woman. And the wife that he separated from married a noble gentleman who was named Aaron, a brother of the said Barnagais. Both the brothers had sons, known to us, of this woman, and these were, or are, great lords, both are brothers of the mother of Prester John, whom all of us knew. All of us who were there knew Romana Orque,[2] sister of the Prester John, who is a noble lady married to a great lord, a noble young gentleman. In our time she

[1] Shoa. [2] *Rumanâ Wark*, the golden pomegranate.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

for the said goods; which is some one of his friends that pre- 584
sents himself, and becomes answerable for him in case he should wish to dismiss his wife, and be not able, through dissipation, or otherwise, to restore all that he has gotten.

Further, at the time when they display the fortune of the bride, the husband is obliged to promise a certain sum of money, or an equivalent in effects, to his wife, in case he should chuse to abandon her, or separate himself from her. This must also be confirmed by an oath of the future husband, and of his surety. A certain time, of twenty or thirty days, is determined also by a reciprocal oath, that on the last of these they will go together to church, and receive the sacrament. When all these matters are concluded, the future spouse appoints the marriage-day, and then returns home. When 585
that day arrives, the intended husband goes again to his bride's house, where she appears, and shews him her moveables (mobiglia), or clothes; and he must promise and swear a-new the fore-mentioned articles; and that he will use his wife well; never leave her without meat, or cloathing; keep her in a good house, &c. all which his surety must confirm. When this is over, the bridegroom takes his lady on his shoulders, and carries her off to his house. If it be at a distance, he does the same thing, but only goes entirely round about the bride's house; then sets her down, and returns her into it. After this ceremony, a solemn banquet takes place, consisting of raw beef and bread, and honey-wine, or hydromel, or another beveridge from grain, called bouza, a sort of beer very sour and disgusting. The feast being ended, the parties mount each a mule, and ride to the bridegroom's house, where is concluded all the ceremony necessary to marriage before they live together. When they have lived together during the appointed term of twenty or thirty days, they must both appear at church, and declare before the priest that they are husband and wife, and that they are come to receive the sacrament. The priest, without more ado, celebrates mass; they communicate, and return home.

After some time, although both have sworn to live all 586
their life faithful to one another, they take the liberty to separate; if it is the husband who wishes to get off, he, or his surety, must pay the wife that which she brought, and

[p. 49]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

586 likewise the sum stipulated in case of separation. If they have had children, the boys always go with the mother, even if there were but an only child; if there be no boys, she takes none of the girls. When the separation comes from the lady, the husband is liable to no restitution, provided he has been always faithful to the married state, as promised; but if it is on account of his bad conduct, or irregular life, that she forms this resolution, he is always subject to his promise and the above-mentioned articles.

It sometimes happens that the husband and wife, mutually, without any cause of ill-will, agree to part; in this case, the effects brought by the wife are united with the sum stipulated by the husband; then divided into equal shares, of which the parties take each one, and return to their former places of abode.

585 This is the established form of those marriages which are said to be celebrated justly, and according to the church. But, with regard to inferior people, these seldom take place; in proof of which I can mention what a person of credit asserted, who had lived twenty-five years in this country. He affirmed, that in all that time he had not seen, nor known, of a marriage at the church, in the places where he lived, except one single instance. I may add to his the testimony of a priest in Tigre, who swore solemnly, that in all Addua, the capital of that province, he was the only man who was married according to the church, that is, in the forementioned manner.

The ordinary way of marrying is this: When two persons ****. Here the MS. breaks of; L. Balugani having been either interrupted, or weary of the subject. It is to be regretted, that he has not given the manner in which the bulk of a nation, very little influenced by Christianity, perform one of the most essential ceremonies in life. His account of the marriage of the church is confirmed by Gregory of Hagara-Christos, in Ludolph's Abyssinian History and Commentary.

It may be gathered from various hints in Mr Bruce's papers, that the Abyssinian peasants and soldiers marry in a few minutes. No settlement, portion, or surety, being necessary, they eat an ox, or two or three sheep raw; the favourite method of cutting pieces from them, while alive, being

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

preferred; a great deal of bouza is drunk on the occasion; dancing, shouting, and various kinds of licentiousness, are practised; if a priest be near, he sprinkles them with holy water, and repeats a hallelujah. The company join in the benediction; and no delicacy of manners constrains either the parties, or the guests. The bride does not appear abroad till about ten days after her marriage. These connections are easily dissolved; but the king's judges, and the governors of provinces, take care that the children shall be maintained by their parents, or others. Judgment is given in all matters by the civil courts; nothing being left to the clergy but the decision of matters fixed by the canons (kanoun), or positive law of the church. 585

The sons of the royal family confined in Wechne are allowed to marry, but it is only by connivance. No persons of rank give their daughters to these exiles. On the other hand, the Ozoros, or princesses, are given away to every great man in the kingdom, and their marriages and divorces are scandalously frequent. The ceremony at the marriage of a prince, or princess, is as follows *: The match having been settled previously, according to the views of the court, preparations are made for the festival, which is generally held during the rainy season, while the country is secure and abandoned to pleasure. The king being seated on the throne, in the large hall of audience, the parties are introduced before him, with their respective attendants. After kissing his hand, they are all magnificently clothed in dresses of brocade, or other rich stuffs, with presents of knives, &c. corresponding to their habits. The crown is sometimes set on their heads; they receive the benediction of the kees hatse, or king's almoner; after which they retire clothed with the caftan, and mount horses given them by the king, on which they ride in great state, in the midst of acclamations of joy and prosperity, to the house of the bridegroom. A banquet, or dinner, is prepared there; in the course of which, many oxen are slaughtered at the door, in order to furnish *brind*, which is served up, reeking from the animal. Deep drinking then commences; in which the ladies and gentlemen indulge together to a degree incredible, because it is un-

* Introd. to the small MS. Chronicle.

[p. 51]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

585 known, in Europe. These marriages are, by no means, permanent: Many of the Ozoros, who always rule their husbands, marry as often as they please; dissolving the marriage preceding at the dictates of convenience, or fancy. But notwithstanding the general licentiousness, there are found several faithful wives and mothers, who are content to deviate from the common example.

766 When any of the king's children dies, it is the custom to hang the audience-chamber with tapestry and curtains, and spread carpets on the floor. The king, having entered, sits on the throne, and the *itoegerd*, a set of professed mourners [167] of the female sex, along with the nobles and household-servants, attend. One of the licaonte, a priest, reads over a list of the former kings with great solemnity, adding, after every name, "May the Lord have mercy on his soul, even to the fifth generation." The assembly reply, "Amen, ycoune, so let it be." At last he says, "Greatly may the Lord have mercy on the soul of ***, who died this day;" on which the Ozoros and their women, the mourners, the household, and the nobles, all set up a loud and general cry of lamentation, and weep for some time. If the person has died in the camp, or city, the coffin is brought before the king, but if not, he performs the ceremony without it. It is afterwards carried out with sendic and nagareet, and buried by the Betwudet, or Billetana-gueta dakakin, in the manner which shall be afterwards mentioned.

361 Koscam * is the richest church in Abyssinia; it is situated on the banks of Kahha, below a ruinous palace, or house, of the king. There are about 40 houses in the village, all belonging to the principal Kuaragna, the party of the queen. All the Kuaragna, Eshtè, Eusebius, and the rest, had their troops drawn up to attack Michael when called to Gondar by Joas, at the advice of Lubo. They designed to engage him on the Angrab, but failed completely. The residing people at Koscam, after Joas's death, were in great fear of Michael, and wore a hood, or cowl, like the monks. Gondar is 2¾ miles, perhaps 3, at its greatest length, and nowhere above a mile broad. The palace is in the centre. Below the town, on the S. W. at the conflux of

* From this to the end, wholly in the words of Mr Bruce.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in January. But the giant of holidays in this season is Epiphany, about a fortnight after Christmas. The holiday commemorates the baptism of Jesus; the name of the holiday, *Ṭimqat,* means "baptism." In preparation for Ṭimqat new clothes are given to children and the adults' *shammā,* grown very gray over the months, are washed in every household.

The program for Ṭimqat is long and complicated. At sunset on the eve of the holiday, the people don their white clothes and repair to the local church, from whence they escort the *tābot* to a place where it will spend the night—near some stream or pool. They go home for supper, and return to that site for singing and dancing until late at night. About two o'clock in the morning Mass is performed, after which quantities of *dābo* and *ṭallā* are consumed. Toward dawn, or shortly after, the clergy bless the water and sprinkle it on those assembled. Many like to bathe in the sanctified water at this time. It is the occasion for baptizing the children of syphilitic mothers and those who want to be rebaptized.

By noon on Ṭimqat Day a large crowd has assembled at the ritual site, those who went home for a little sleep having returned, and the holy ark is escorted back to its church in colorful procession. The clergy, bearing robes and umbrellas of many hues, perform rollicking dances and songs; the elders march solemnly with their weapons, attended by middle-aged men singing a long-drawn, low-pitched *haaa hooo;* and the children run about with sticks and games. Dressed up in their finest, the women chatter excitedly on their one real day of freedom in the year. The young braves leap up and down in spirited dances, tirelessly repeating rhythmic songs. When the holy ark has been safely restored to its dwelling-place, everyone goes home for feasting. In the meantime, the eyes of gamesome men and women have met and secret rendezvous have been arranged.

Ṭimqat ushers in a season of weddings, which comes to an abrupt end with the onset of the great fast before Easter. For eight long weeks, body and spirit are depressed by the heavy fasting requirements. The mood reaches a climax in the final week of Lent. Then no heavy work is allowed, and the more devout peasants go to church many times and intensify their daily schedule of prayers. Total abstinence is practiced for the forty-eight hours preceding the final Mass, performed in the middle of the night before Easter.

Gluttony follows this long deprivation. It is a season of the highest spirits. For eight weeks the inexorable requirement to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays is waived. The bins are full with the harvest of wheat, barley, and chick-peas. New crops of pulse start to appear in the fields. It is the most favored time of all for weddings.

And then, as the Amhara themselves view it, June brings another time of sadness. With the onset of the heavy rains come attacks of malaria in the lowlands, typhus in the highlands. Swollen streams make travel difficult and

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

836 183 peers with the insulting term *ʾilb* ("castrated one"). Indeed, the word that comes closest to signifying male adolescent in Amharic, *goramsā*, has the primary connotation of one who goes around with women.

836 572 The conditions attending premarital sexual experience for youths explain in part the nature of adolescent male peer relations. A *goramsā* needs at least one fairly close friend, not only as a confidant for his "secrets," but also to [837] aid him in his affairs. When one *goramsā* goes to the home of a married woman—the strict controls against premarital affairs for girls limit his choice to married women or divorcees—the other stands guard to see that the husband or anyone else does not intrude. When he finds himself in rivalry with 836 572 a competitor for the same woman, the friend assists him if the fighting gets 578 difficult. On the other hand, the existence of a limited number of accessible females in any area implies that no alliance of friends can become very large; the competition is too great. The conflicts of interest among *goramsā* often provoke feuding and sometimes serious *dulā* fights.

836 The unwed girl, by contrast, must remain a virgin at all costs. It is important to the groom, not only because of the religious and social sentiments involved, but also because the Amhara male cherishes the sense of "conquering" his woman. A girl who is found not to be a virgin on her wedding [585] night will be beaten by her husband and possibly returned to her parents. Her parents will be scandalized, and, if she is sent back, will probably give her a beating.

882 In order to protect the girl's virginity, she is kept under close watch by her parents after the age of ten or eleven. They do not allow her to go outside the home area by herself or to associate with boys who are not her relatives. She attends festive celebrations in the company of her parents. In some families she is kept from doing excessively heavy work in order to prevent the accidental rupture of her hymen.

881 The onset of menstruation is kept secret, since menstruation is seen as a shameful event for the unmarried woman. But as the girl approaches the age 582 of puberty her mother will be advised by other female relatives that it is time to be on the lookout for a husband. Twelve or thirteen is the customary marrying age for girls, as compared with the late teens or early twenties for boys; and it has not been uncommon for girls to marry still younger, especially in former times.

*883 This strict surveillance of the daughter does not wholly prevent a mild sort of flirting which occurs at the marketplace or on public holidays. On [832] the latter occasions, especially Masqāl and ʈImqat, the girl may make some effort to appear attractive. She may wear her best clothes, dress up her hair, and, if she can afford it, put on a bit of perfume. These occasions provide a [584] chance for the unmarried boy to spot an interesting mate, in which case he

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

may ask around to learn the identity of her father and then present the matter hopefully to his own father.

Despite this possibility of concession to the boy's amorous desires, the interests of the father are decisive in the selection of a marriage mate, and traditionally the boy has not even known what his bride looks like until the wedding itself. The boy who dares to choose a wife on his own commits an offense for which the father has the moral right to curse and disinherit him. Marriage is regarded as a bond between families, not individuals, and the families of prospective brides are carefully inspected before the father agrees to a contract of betrothal. In making his choice, the father looks for a family whose economic level is at least as high as, if not slightly higher, than his own. He makes certain that the family does not have members who are leprous or who practice the manual crafts associated with the evil eye. He sends a messenger to visit the family on some pretext, for the purpose of determining the character of the girl and her parents. If there is any consanguine relation between the two families, he makes sure that the prospective bride and groom are separated by more than seven generations; that is, they must not have a common great-great-grandparent. A further consideration might be whether there has been any strife or rivalry between the two families, in which case the father may want to try to resolve it by means of a "political" marriage.

Once the father has decided upon a suitable mate for his son, with the advice of the mother and perhaps other relatives, he sends one or more intermediaries, usually elders, to speak on his behalf with the girl's father. The interview is conducted with considerable circumlocution, the petitioners veiling their true purpose until late in the conversation and the girl's father displaying reluctance to grant their request. Often no agreement is reached at this meeting, and the petitioning party must wait to ask a second time. If the girl's father is unwilling to give her hand, he will beg off with some polite excuse, such as that the girl is too young or that he has already promised her to someone else. If he is willing, a date for a formal betrothal is set, at which time the boy and his father together with a group of elders and other relatives repair to the home of the girl's father. After the boy gives presents to the girl's parents, the two fathers discuss their respective contributions of land, cattle, and other goods to the prospective household. When these economic arrangements are settled, a contract for marriage is sworn before witnesses and a date for the wedding is agreed upon, leaving ample time for the two families to vie in preparing sumptuous feasts for the occasion. If the girl is quite young, as long as two or three years may elapse between engagement and marriage.

The wedding festivities commence at the home of the girl's father. After

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

585 a certain amount of ritualized delay, the groom and his party are admitted. The groom is not supposed to have seen his bride previously, and is at first shown only a number of similarly dressed maids, among whom sits his fiancée. The maids are then concealed by a curtain or in another room while one of the best men, called *mizē*, determines through various ruses which of the girls is the bride. She is revealed to the groom by being carried out on the back of the *mizē*.

The civil service itself is quite simple, consisting of an oath in the name of the emperor or of some deity that "she is my wife" and "he is my husband," the latter often uttered in so faint a voice that it must be interpreted by one of the bride's relatives. After the oaths and a certain amount of feasting, the couple and the groom's party depart for the home of the groom's parents, where another celebration is under way.

After the festivities the bride and groom retire to a hut which has been set aside for them for the first week or so of their marriage. The experience of the wedding night cannot be very pleasant for the bride. For the first time in her life she is far from the familiar setting of her parental home. She [864] has had little or no sexual instruction, other than the knowledge that sexual [831] matters are "rude" and that she is supposed to resist her husband's advances as fiercely as possible. The groom, on the other hand, has been taught to regard the nuptial night as a battle in which the bride must be forcibly overcome. If somewhat anxious himself, he at least has the moral, and sometimes the physical, support of his two or three *mizē*. If he is unable to accomplish the defloration, he may call in the first *mizē*—usually a married relative or friend with some experience—who will perform the task. When at last the bride has been conquered, the *mizē* take the bloodstained cloth as proof of the girl's virginity. Their triumphant chant—*ber ambār sabara-lewo*, "he has broken the silver bracelet for you" (for the bride's parents)—is the signal for further rejoicing and revelry among the wedding guests. On the morrow groom and friends discuss the conquest with masculine glee, and the bride remains embarrassed and cowed.

[831] The trauma of the wedding night does not appear to do irreparable damage to the girl, however, for Amhara women have the reputation for enjoying sexuality as fully as the men. Indeed, some Amhara maintain that the girl will respect neither her groom nor herself if she does not put up a fight 585 until subdued. With the consummation of her marriage, moreover, the 885 Amhara girl has become a woman, a *sēt*. This represents a considerable elevation of her status and permits her to acquire certain distinctively adult possessions, usually presented to her by the groom. Traditionally these have included a dress, a double-layered toga (*kuttā*), a headband, a mirror, a leg bracelet, a ring, an umbrella, and, in wealthier families, a colored silk robe.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

For the groom, too, marriage means a gratifying boost toward adult status, symbolized by his receiving from the bride's parents distinctively adult male possessions—a *kutā*, perhaps a *barnos*, and a rifle if they can afford it.

Such is the basic pattern of betrothal and marriage among the Amhara, though many of the details vary from province to province.[6] There are, in addition, certain traditional alternatives to this standard procedure. One of these involves the solemnization of the marriage oath by taking Communion, a rite necessary for a marriage to be counted as legal by the Church, and followed by the ordained clergy and the most pious families. Another form requires no oath at all; the husband is simply expected to provide a salary and clothes for his wife. This procedure is followed chiefly by soldiers and traders, and by those who are marrying for the second time.

Still another type of marriage is that known as *got assīr* ("ten beds") in which the boy goes to live with the girl's family while both are quite young. In this case the boy has his work apprenticeship under the girl's father. After several years, when the girl reaches puberty, a second wedding ceremony will take place—this time at the home of the groom's parents—and the union will be consummated. This type of arrangement tends to be made when the boy's family is too poor to provide enough to get him started on his own, or if the girl's father has no son to help him with the work.

There is, finally, a form of marriage by abduction. If the girl's father does not grant the request of the emissaries of the boy's father, and if the boy's father is still interested, the boy may go with two or three friends to capture her when she is on the way to market or fetching water. When this happens, the couple will approach the girl's parents after they have been married for some time and seek a reconciliation. Occasionally poor families have deliberate recourse to this form of marriage, arranging in advance a bride capture so as to avoid having to prepare the expensive wedding feasts.[7]

Although marriage marks the termination of childhood for the Amhara, it does not by itself signify the full attainment of adulthood. The newly wed couple lives at first in the home of the boy's father, and to truly "arrive" they must establish their own separate household. If the boy's family is wealthy, he may have his own house ready by the time of the wedding. More often, the couple spends a certain amount of time—a few months, or in some cases as much as two or three years—living in the home of the groom's father until their own house is built. To tarry unduly in the father's house, however, is considered a mark of laziness and a great shame.

Furthermore, because of the somewhat arbitrary manner in which the spouses are chosen for each other, there is often a serious problem of post-marital adjustment, a problem not rendered any less difficult by the proximity of the girl's mother-in-law. The divorce pattern is well known among

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

571 returnees has generally been sympathetic, and some of them have been quite
565 helpful to individuals or groups of students during their hard pressed days
178 as students abroad. The situation of action, however, has kept their degree
[829] of support of the returnees to a minimum. Three patterns of elder-returnee relations can be discerned: (1) The elder is concerned above all to maintain his position and, hence, to defend himself against any encroachment on his power on the part of younger people. This type has resorted to the various techniques of court politics—false rumors, libelous accusations, etc.—in order to check the influence of the returnees and have the more reformist among them transferred to less favorable positions. (2) The elder believes that if anything is to be accomplished in Ethiopia, it must be done by the educated young people, but he must be cautious in supporting the latter, for fear of getting into trouble at the palace himself if he offends any entrenched interests. Even when a returnee has been able to get the support of such a man for some reform, he may find when the time for implementation comes that his supporter has been transferred and left no commitment in writing for his successor. (3) While generally sympathetic to the returnees, this type fears the rashness and inexperience of youth and feels itself threatened by the prospect of being displaced. His apprehension is not aggressively expressed, but tends to take the form of discrediting the returnees by blaming them for every possible mistake. Whether due to the antagonism, caution, or ambivalence of the new nobility, the returnees have found relatively little effective support for their projected reforms. The ministers typically have shown them a progressive face and just as often have pursued a stagnant policy.

571 Vocational malaise and ideological uncertainty thus reinforce each other.
581 The cycle of frustration is complete when we consider the marital problems
584 of the returnee, which revolve about the difficulty of getting to know poten-
178 tial spouses, financial handicaps, the changing definition of marriage, and
[562] latent warfare between the sexes in the modernizing sector.

571 Except for a small number of returnees whose marriages have had to be
584 arranged ones because of political considerations, the foreign-educated men,
834 and a few of the women, are determined to choose their own spouses. Getting
178 to know a potential spouse, however, remains a difficult matter. The traditional mores prevail with regard to social relationships between the sexes. A girl who goes out with boys is *ipso facto* presumed to have a bad character, and many of the girls in whom a returnee might be interested are not permitted to go out by their parents. There are few places where a young man and woman can go together and have privacy. Those who attempt to follow the Western custom of dating have been embarrassed.

• 585 The cost of marriage presents another obstacle. The quality of housing that
511 a returnee aspires to for his potential family is far beyond his means in the
571 present-day economy. Other assumed necessities—an automobile, expensive

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

furniture, etc.—are equally burdensome investments if the returnee does not possess them. Furthermore, the traditional large wedding is still expected in most cases. In the city this involves an enormous expense—as much as Eth$2,000-$4,000—which often puts the groom in debt for several years.*

There are many returnees for whom these factors are excuses more than insuperable obstacles, or who frankly prefer the extended bachelordom made possible by the greater freedom of the modernizing sector to an uncertain match. If, as frequently is the case, they would marry only an educated wife, they may be discouraged by the shortage of educated Ethiopian women; or beset by too much pride, if coming from a humble background, to ask for the hand of an educated girl who is likely to come from an upper-class family. They may be victims of the cycle of antagonism that has developed between educated men and women in Ethiopia, the former attacking the latter for demanding too much in the way of material things and being only superficially modernized—"half-baked"—and the latter indicting the former for preferring foreign girls and unjustly neglecting Ethiopian women.

But the root of the problem is often deeper (leaving aside, for this discussion, characterological factors). It is entwined with a basic insecurity about the whole idea of marriage in the transitional atmosphere of contemporary Ethiopia. Perhaps nowhere in the minds of the returnees do traditional and modern norms stand in such delicate counterpoise as with regard to the question of the sort of wife one should marry and the proper type of relation to have with her. Should he prefer the traditional woman, modestly dressed and inconspicuous, or the Western ideal of a sexually attractive female? Should he have a wife who stays at home all the time, or one whom he takes along to social gatherings? Should he have a wife with whom to share interests and discuss problems, or one to order about and keep in her place? The returnees have normally been attracted by the Western marriage pattern while abroad, but it is so out of place in the Ethiopian context that many are troubled by the prospect on return. The foreign-educated man feels he should have an educated wife, but he also feels threatened by a woman who is independent, especially if she is holding a job. Such ambivalence adds an additional dimension of vulnerability to the returnee's position.

In sum: the conditions of life receptive to a modernizing intellectual stratum have not yet been established in Ethiopia. The personal frustrations of the returnees are an inevitable consequence of their being the bearers of modern culture in a traditional oligarchical order—especially one that has

---

* A new custom has developed in response to this problem. It has become the practice in some offices for sheets of paper to be circulated prior to a wedding in the ministry or agency where the groom is employed. Co-workers write the amount they wish to be deducted from their salaries in their behalf. Most recently, modest weddings have started to become respectable.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

shown by the vagueness of Amhara kin terminology. The term for brother, *wandam*, also applies to all the male relatives of one's generation and even to one's close friends. Similarly, the terms for uncle and aunt (*agot* and *akeste*) are sometimes used for nephew, niece, and cousin as well; and often these terms are simply replaced by the abstract generic word for kin, *zamad*. The extent of reciprocal obligations among kin outside the nuclear family is a function primarily of the amount of spontaneous affection that exists among the individuals concerned and how close they happen to live to each other. Relatives on good terms with one another normally take turns visiting one another and eating together on holidays. They help one another in the event of sickness, death, fire, litigation, and murder. Orphaned or economically burdensome children are often farmed out to the households of more successful relatives.

These activities are based on voluntary reciprocity or good will. In its formal structure, the Amhara kinship system stresses the independence of the nuclear family. Although it occasionally happens that married brothers live in a single large compound under the moral authority of their father or an older brother, who is known as its *alaqā* and is responsible for the compound's payment of taxes, each nuclear family lives in separate quarters and produces and consumes its own supply of food by working its own separate acreage of land.

Within the nuclear family itself, the ties that bind are limited by certain fundamental safeguards of individual rights. One is the institution of private property. The land which each partner brings into a marriage or later acquires through bequests remains his own until death. If they should separate, each takes his own land, and the goods acquired by the household during their marriage are divided equally between them. There is also the provision of *gĭl*, a quantity of property that either or both of the spouses may designate, prior to getting married, as strictly private property and indivisible in case of divorce. In the event that a nuclear family enters one of the modern savings associations or *equb* (to be discussed below), husband and wife join as separate members.

The possibility of divorce is another safeguard of individual rights within the nuclear family. Only in the *querbān* type of marriage is divorce forbidden. This form is normally restricted to priests and very devout, usually older, people; and even then divorces sometimes occur, the couple preferring the displeasure of the church to a life of continued antagonism. The standard sort of marriage is the *samānya* or contract form, in which the equivalent of a simple "I do" concludes the match and a simple "I do not" legitimates divorce. The divorce may be initiated by either husband or wife. An Amharic